

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 LIBREV 01074 061204Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----035398 061205Z /46
O 061020Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0977
AMEMBASSY SEOUL NIACT IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T LIBREVILLE 1074

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, KS, US, CH
SUBJ: CHINESE ENGINEER REQUESTS ASYLUM IN SOUTH KOREAN
EMBASSY

REF: A) LIBREVILLE 1057 (NOTAL) B) SEOUL 3773

1. FOLLOWING ARE DEVELOPMENTS IN CASE REPORTED REFTEL (A) AS
RELATED TO ME BY ROK AMBASSADOR KIM MORNING MAY 6:
A. FOLLOWING OUR DISCUSSION MAY 4, AMBASSADOR WENT TO GOG
AUTHORITIES AND FORMALLY REQUESTED THEIR ASSISTANCE.
B. EVENING MAY 4, PRESIDENT BONGO ASSURED AMBASSADOR
PERSONALLY THAT HE WOULD HELP SAVE MAN'S LIFE.
C. CHINESE EMBASSY HERE HAS FORMALLY DEMANDED THAT GOG
RETURN DEFECTOR TO THEIR EMBASSY (PROBABLY BY NOTE ON MAY 5)
D. EVENING MAY 5 ROK AMBASSADOR WAS VISITED BY GOG MINISTER
OF TRANSPORT RAWIRI AND PRESIDENTIAL ADC LT COL NGARI WHO
TOLD HIM PRESIDENT REQUESTS THAT ROK AMBASSADOR DELIVER DEFECTOR
TO CHINESE EMBASSY.
E. KIM TOLD THEM HE HAD NO INSTRUCTIONS DO SO FROM SEOUL AND
REQUESTED IMMEDIATE APPOINTMENT WITH BONGO.
F. RAWIRI AND NGARI REPORTED BACK IN 15 MINUTES THAT
BONGO WAS HAVING DINNER WITH CHAD PRESIDENT MALLOUM, COULD NOT
SEE AMBASSADOR NOW, BUT WOULD SEE HIM AT SOME LATER UNSPECIFIED
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TIME. EMISSARIES THEN REPEATED BONGO'S INSTRUCTION TO HAND
OVER DEFECTOR TO CHINESE.
G. ROK AMBASSADOR HELD HIS GROUND AND SAID HE COULD NOT ACT
WITHOUT INSTRUCTIONS FROM HIS GOVERNMENT. SITUATION AS OF MORNING
MAY 6 IS THEREFORE THAT CHINESE IS STILL IN ROK EMBASSY WHILE
AMBASSADOR AWAITS INSTRUCTIONS.

2. AMBASSADOR KIM ASKED ME IF I HAD HEARD FROM DEPT AND I REPLIED IN NEGATIVE. HE THEN ADDED FOLLOWING PERTINENT POINTS:

A. CHINESE HAVE BEEN TOLD BY GABONESE THAT MAN IS UNDER PROTECTION OF A FOREIGN EMBASSY (UNNAMED) AND APPARENTLY THAT HE WILL BE HANDED BACK.

B. CHINESE DEFECTOR HAS THREATENED TO KILL HIMSELF IF ROK AMBASSADOR INSIST HE LEAVE EMBASSY.

C. DEFECTOR AT KIM'S REQUEST HAS WRITTEN FOUR PAGE LETTER IN CHINESE EXPLAINING REASONS WHY HE DEFECTING (ACCORDING AMBASSADOR IT IS BASICALLY BECAUSE HE CAN NO LONGER LIVE IN CHINESE SOCIETY AS PRESENTLY CONSTITUTED).

D. CHINESE SPEAKS ONLY CHINESE WITH SMATTERING OF FRENCH.

3. ROK AMBASSADOR VERY DEFINITELY WOULD LIKE TO INVOLVE US. HE WONDERED WHETHER HE SHOULDN'T TURN DEFECTOR OVER TO US AS GREAT POWER STANDING FORTH AS CHAMPION OF HUMAN RIGHTS. AT MINIMUM HE WOULD PROBABLY LIKE ME TO WEIGH IN WITH BONGO IN BEHALF HIS PITCH TO ALLOW DEFECTOR TO LEAVE COUNTRY. I TOLD HIM I COULD NOT SEE HOW TURNING HIM OVER TO US WOULD HELP SINCE WE HAD NO MEANS AT OUR DISPOSAL OTHER THAN THOSE HE HAS ALREADY TRIED, THAT I PRESUMED ROK STOOD FOR HUMAN RIGHTS JUST AS WE DID, AND THAT IN CASE BONGO MIGHT NOW FIND IT VERY DIFFICULT TO REVERSE HIS DECISION, WHICH APPARENTLY KNOWN TO CHINESE, NO MATTER WHO WAS INVOLVED IN CASE. I ASKED WHETHER AMBASSADOR KIM HAD DISCUSSED CASE WITH LOCAL UNHCR REP AND HE REPLIED HE WAS ON WAY TO DO SO THIS MORNING.

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4. COMMENT: KIM OBVIOUSLY FEELS HIMSELF IN DIFFICULT POSITION. GIVEN BONGO'S INSTRUCTION, HE FEELS HE HAS ONLY TWO CHOICES:

A) EITHER TO TURN MAN OVER TO GABONESE FOR DELIVERY TO CHINESE (HE WILL NOT TURN MAN OVER DIRECTLY SINCE ROK HAS NO DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH PRC) OR:

B) SIMPLY TURN HIM OUT OF EMBASSY EVEN THOUGH MAN MAY NOT GO. EITHER WAY, AMBASSADOR IS SURE MAN WILL EVENTUALLY BE ELIMINATED SINCE CHINESE MUST ENFORCE DISCIPLINE IN OTHER "OFFICIAL" CHINESE OVERSEAS. KIM WILL NONETHELESS AWAIT INSTRUCTIONS FROM SEOUL AND AS OF MOMENT, GOG AUTHORITIES ARE NOT PRESSING HIM TO ACT BEFORE THEN.

5. I DO NOT THINK WE SHOULD IN ANY WAY VOLUNTEER TO ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR DEFECTOR AS KIM WOULD LIKE US TO DO. THERE IS, OF COURSE, POSSIBILITY THAT IF KIM TURNS HIM LOOSE, DEFECTOR WILL COME TO OUR EMBASSY FOR SAME PURPOSE. I THEREFORE AGAIN URGENTLY REQUEST ANY SUGGESTIONS OR INSTRUCTIONS DEPT MAY HAVE. ONE POSSIBILITY WOULD BE MAKE DEMARCHE TO BONGO IN SUPPORT OF KIM'S OWN APPROACH TO PERMIT MAN TO LEAVE COUNTRY. GIVEN BONGO'S APPARENT COMMITMENT TO CHINESE, HOWEVER, IT MAY BE VERY DIFFICULT AT THIS POINT FOR ANYONE TO GET HIM TO CHANGE HIS MIND, AND HE

ALSO MAY PROVE VERY DIFFICULT TO SEE FOR PRESENT. ANOTHER
WOULD BE FOR ROK TO GET UNHCR TO ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR
DEFECTOR BUT I DO NOT KNOW HOW UNHCR WILL REACT TO KIMS APPROACH.
NEITHER KIM NOR I KNOW WHY BONGO CHANGED HIS MIND. WE CAN ONLY
SPECULATE THAT AFTER REFLECTION, HE DECIDED GOG-PRC RELATIONS
WERE SUFFICIENTLY IMPORTANT TO HIM THAT HE DID NOT WISH TO UPSET
THEM.

6. IF NOT ALREADY DONE, DEPT PLEASE PASS REFTTEL (A) TO SEOUL.
TIENKEN

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